

**Minutes from the session of the working group SOC220 of
the EESC dealing with Draft Opinion
“EWC: a new role in promoting the European integration”
Brussels, 06.09.2006
EESC main building
Rapporteur Mr. Edgardo Iozia
Chairperson: Ms. Renate Hornung-Draus**

Dear Colleagues,

For your information:

Today another session of the EESC working group dealing with preparation of a draft opinion on the “*European Works Councils: a new role in promoting European integration*”(Rapporteur: *Eduardo Iozia*) took place. This was a final session of the working group on which the draft has been voted upon and finally adopted. It will now be submitted to the plenary session within the weeks to come. You can find a previous version of the draft from July 2006 attached to this message; the version that’s been adopted today is not available yet. Nonetheless, I would like to inform you about points on which there was the hottest discussion today.

- 1) Firstly, all the participants expressed their concern about the tense atmosphere in which the debate in the working group took place. The members from the side of UNICE (Group 1) and the employees went very emotional and accused each of conducting ‘ideological war’ and ‘religious crusade’. I mention it only to prove that the communication between these parties was indeed very tense, sometimes even hostile and often emotional during the whole process of elaborating the draft.
- 2) The Employers’ side (Mr. Renate Hornung-Draus, chairwoman of the working group) claimed that EESC is exceeding its mandate by adopting a draft opinion in which it appeals to the European Commission for an update of the Directive 94/45. By adopting such an opinion in favour of the amendment and update (instead of sole revision) of the EWC Directive the EESC, according to her, ignores and violates the principles and achievements of the social dialogue.
- 3) During the debate the vast majority of participants expressed their willingness to support the draft opinion and outnumbered the negative opinions.

There were many final amendments voted of which the most important ones were:

- Employers’ reps wanted to delete any indications that the Draft Opinion shall go in the direction of not only revising the EWC Directive but also updating/amending it. These indications are to be found among others in point 1.9, 7, 6.7 and others of the attached Draft Opinion. These proposals to delete such indications were rejected.
- It was possible to reject the proposal of the Employers’ reps to delete the whole point 7 which represents the core of the Draft Opinion. This shall be

considered as a big success since there was a very hot and emotional discussion about that in the workgroup.

- The Employers' reps wanted to delete the link and recurrence between the EWC and their activities (transnational agreements) and the CSR as such. They proposed to delete points 9.6 and 9.7 totally. This proposal was rejected too.
- The Employers' reps proposed to introduce a debate on the possible amendments and revision of the EWC Directive on the national level in order to enable the national social partners who will be affected by the outcome of the revision to influence its shape. The proposal was rejected since it would clearly lead to a dilution of the debate and a huge slow down.
- The Employers' reps proposed to delete the link between the employee rights to information and consultation and common EU civic rights. These rights are mentioned also in the Draft Constitutional Treaty and Charta of Fundamental Rights. They are allegedly not precise and the future of these two documents is unclear and thus mentioning them leads to confusion. This initiative was rejected.

These are of course only the main points that were discussed.

The outcome of the final voting was 64 votes in favour of adopting the Draft Opinion and 23 against it (with 3 abstentions). This means that the odds for the voting over the Draft Opinion in the plenary session seem to be quite well. Assuming that the Draft is accepted by the plenary of the EESC it gives also some hope that once the ball is on the side of the EC there will be some new energy in the process of amending the EWC Directive.

I hope this information was helpful and interesting for you. In case of further questions don't hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,
Romuald Jagodzinski
ETUI-REHS